



Maricopa County Partnership Network Responds to Female Substance Abusers in the Criminal Justice System

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Although criminal justice and treatment providers share the common goal of addressing the multitude of problems inherent in substance abusers, formal partnerships have not traditionally been in place to provide a coordinated system of case management. In Maricopa County, we noted that as the number of female substance abusers entering the criminal justice system continued to increase and the resources available to this clientele diminished, the disjointed system between criminal justice and treatment providers became increasingly pronounced.

Maricopa County responded to this emerging need by building partnerships between existing criminal justice agencies and service delivery systems in our community. The Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT) of the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) fueled this effort. In September 1995, CSAT awarded eight cooperative agreements for Criminal Justice Treatment Networks, 5-year demonstration and knowledge development programs. Maricopa County was a recipient of one of these awards, which funded the Women's Treatment, Services and Supervision Network.

Current research suggests that the most effective interventions for substance abusing offenders involve a system that combines a continuum of accountability and treatment services with a process that is flexible and responsive to varying local conditions and population groups. To be cost-effective, such a system must also be designed to deal with both volume and quality of services.

Representatives from the Maricopa County Adult Probation Department (APD), Maricopa County Sheriff's Office (MCSO), Pretrial Service Agency (PSA), Arizona Department of Health Services (DHS), and TASC joined forces to develop the concept of an integrated, treatment systems approach to substance-abusing female offenders. The county attorney and public defender offices, the Maricopa County Superior Court, the Administrative Offices of the Court, and local treatment providers also support the Network. The communication, trust, and cooperation developed among Network partners set the stage for systems change and integrated services.

The mission of the Women's Network is to create an integrated and coordinated system of assessment, supervision, and delivery of services for substance-abusing women in Maricopa County. This article describes: 1) our Network's partnership development and points of intervention, 2) the types of meaningful, long-lasting systems change that have been produced, and 3) what we know about our clients and the impact of their involvement in the Network.

Partnership Development

Women's Network staff are assigned to teams that include the Network's probation and surveillance officers as well as TASC case managers and assessors. These teams are housed in probation offices and offer centralized services in the metropolitan Phoenix area. This integrated approach is designed to allow criminal justice and treatment professionals to share their expertise, combine and maximize the use of valuable resources, and work in concert to develop strategies to combat substance abuse and reduce criminal behavior in the female offender population. The Network has continued to develop its use of case management to create and coordinate services for the client.

Case managers and participating service providers work together to ensure that the client's progress is not undermined by conflicting expectations and inter-organizational problems. Case managers match available resources and services to the offender's identified needs. The case manager also determines if the client has received the services outlined in the case plan and whether the client has benefited from those services. These techniques assist service providers in brokering and monitoring services across agency boundaries. Typically, relationships between agencies have included competing with one another for referrals, rather than working together using their respective areas of expertise. Case managers and participating treatment providers in the Network must work together, integrating their approaches to assist in the client's positive recovery. Maintaining this level of collaboration can be difficult in a treatment community comprised of small non-profit agencies.

The most dynamic partnership developed with treatment providers includes the implementation of gender-specific services for female substance-abusing offenders. Female offenders have traditionally been offered fewer supports than male offenders, and their needs have been addressed in a criminal justice system designed for men. As a result of the criminal justice agency's male-dominated referral base, providers committed to gender-specific treatment are limited. The recent shift in the treatment community has provided positive changes to all female offenders, however, whether or not they are involved in the Network. The shift to gender-responsive approaches continues to occur both in the treatment community and in jails and prisons.

Systems Change

The Women's Network has effectively designed and implemented a systems change. The change has affected both the quantity and quality of available treatment and ancillary services. The Network strives to provide a therapeutic atmosphere for women to improve their quality of life through a supportive team of providers. The Network introduced services-level coordination, systems-level coordination, and team-based collaboration, all of which have produced meaningful, lasting systems change in collaboration and client-level integration of services.

The services-level coordination occurs at the level of the client and the probation and case management staff, who interact directly with clients. The Network has dedicated itself to identifying and enlisting assistance from key community providers in the primary areas of stabilization. As a result, Network participants become empowered to access available services. Communication with these key agencies has improved relationships between the treatment community and ancillary service

agencies. Our outreach efforts in terms of stabilizing female clients have resulted in less fragmented services and a system using cooperative and compatible providers to address stabilization needs. In addition, community providers have been initiated into the Network's philosophy of holistic, developmental care.

Systems-level coordination required structural realignments and changes in how agencies interact with each other in sharing information, resources, and clients. Without some level of systems integration or coordination, case managers would have to repeatedly negotiate across boundaries. A significant systems-level coordination in the Women's Network includes multiple entry points. A woman who enters the criminal justice system at various stages of legal intervention receives consistent information regarding Network services and is assured of specific service referrals to meet her needs.

The Network's establishment of ALPHA, a jail-based, 6-month residential program resulting from collaborative efforts with MCSO's jail staff and Network stakeholders, is an excellent example of systems-level coordination. The success of ALPHA, along with case management intervention, has heightened awareness in the jail system of the effectiveness of early substance abuse intervention programming. Both MCSO and APD staff have witnessed ALPHA female graduates entering the community with greater stability, optimism, and awareness of their ability to establish positive lifestyle changes.

The Arizona Department of Corrections (ADC) is our newest partner, allowing community-based female parolees to access Network services and supervision. The ADC is the Network's first partner to use non-grant dollars to secure Network participation. Through a Cooperative Purchase Agreement, ADC provides a parole officer and funds a TASC case manager, thus bringing another team to our Network. As a result, a female in the criminal justice system can now receive an integrated and coordinated system of assessment, supervision, and delivery of services from the pretrial stage, through sentencing and probation, and finally, through sentencing and parole.

Other stakeholders have also taken steps toward sustaining the Network beyond the grant period. For example, Network staff from PSA and MCSO, originally funded by the grant, are now supported by their parent agency. APD, the lead agent, has dedicated Network probation and surveillance officers since the inception of the Network, as well as office space for the probation and case manager teams. TASC and APD are pursuing other grant dollars to support Network services and continue to market the Network approach and philosophy.

The team-based collaboration allows representatives from multiple systems to develop goals and work towards them at both the services and systems levels. Collaboration is also a vehicle for empowering the clients to take charge of their own lives. Client-level teams in the Network consist of the probation officer, case manager, and any other provider who is invested in the treatment plan, all of whom are committed to working across organizations to promote a comprehensive continuum of care. The implementation of a comprehensive needs assessment is a welcome change in the criminal justice system. The Network assessment provides a holistic case-planning model. Because the Network's emphasis is on addressing multiple goals in a coordinated way, the initial assessment provides direction for team-based coordination.

Another example of team-based coordination is the ongoing opportunities for constructive communication. The Network has established a number of meeting forums that have effectively increased the safety and comfort level for discussing ideas, differences, and conflicts regarding team collaboration and service delivery.

About Network Clients and Outcomes

Since September 1997, more than 300 women have successfully completed the Network's voluntary, 12-month program.

Who Are Network Clients?	
42% are between the ages of 31 and 40.	75% report experiencing multiple abuse (mental, physical, and sexual).
42% have never been married. 27% have been divorced	62% are white. 16% are Hispanic. 15% are African American.
24% have no children. 23% have two children. 21% have one child.	31% report methamphetamine as their drug of choice. 26% report crack as their drug of choice.
45% have a highest level of education between the 7th and 11th grades.	54% come to the Network from a controlled environment (jail or residential treatment).

What Are Their Program Outcomes?	
80% are in stable housing.	Between January and November 1999, 78% of Network clients tested negative for drugs.
70% are employed either part time or full time.	Network clients receive three times as many referrals to AOD and support services than non-Network clients.
62% are enrolled in educational and/or vocational programs.	The average length of time in the Network's year-long program for successful participants is less than one year (234 days).

Continuing Our Efforts

As Project Director of the Women's Network, I extend appreciation and thanks to CSAT and the Network stakeholders in the development, implementation, and ongoing maintenance of a seamless system of criminal justice supervision and substance abuse, mental health, primary health care, and social services in Maricopa County. Plans to implement the Network approach with other criminal justice populations, such as transferred youth, are under way. By continuing our efforts to expand Network services, we believe we will help our clients to experience decreased rates of substance abuse, criminal behavior, and recidivism. We also believe Network participation will promote greater life skills in our clients, improve physical and mental health, and enhance the lives of women, children, and their family members. ■

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